

## **Historic, archived document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



GARDEN CALENDAR

P698a

A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, May 17, 1932.

At this time of the year gardeners are setting out large numbers of tender flower and vegetable plants so I thought that a few suggestions on transplanting might not be out of order today. Much depends upon the condition of your plants and your soil but more depends upon the way in which you do the work. We often hear sweet potato, cabbage, tomato and tobacco growers talking about a "planting season" by which they mean a period right after a rain when there is plenty of moisture in the soil. You folks who have only a small number of plants to set can create your own "season" in the soil by applying water around the roots of each plant as it is being set. Even if there is considerable moisture in the soil your plants will start off better if they are watered in.

You folk who start your annual and perennial flowering plants in the house or in a hotbed or coldframe will agree with me that it is not an easy matter to move them to the garden without some losses. No matter how careful you may be you are sure to lose many of the roots. That means that each plant will have to form a new root system.

To begin with the practice of "pulling" the plants from the plant-bed and thereby stripping them of most of their small or feeder roots is wrong. First soak the soil of the plant bed with water an hour or two before you want to lift the plants. Then run a trowel or a spade beneath the plants to loosen them. This method will insure your getting a fair root system with each plant. In all cases where plants are lifted without a mass of soil about their roots they should be protected from drying by wrapping the bundles in wet bags or some moist covering material to exclude the air and prevent them from drying. Here is another suggestion for handling tomato, cabbage, sweet potato and other plants that are lifted without soil on their roots. Provide an old tub or pail in which you make a mixture of clay soil and water of about the thickness of good thickened gravy, and as you lift the plants take them in small bunches of say 8 or 10 and dip their roots in this slime. The rootlets will be coated with an air-proof covering that will keep them from drying while on the way to the field or garden.

I've found it a good practice to dip the roots of seedling zinnias, marigolds, cosmos, or any of my flowering plants in a mud solution when transplanting them. Many of the annual flowering plants come too thickly and have to be thinned. If you are careful you can transplant the thinnings to another location. When you thin your garden beets you can take the surplus plants, trim off most of the tops, dip the roots in thin mud and transplant them. You can even transplant radishes and carrots but the roots are liable to be stubby on account of having their tips broken off in lifting them.

(over)

During the past week I have been setting some splendid tomato plants that were grown in 6-inch flower pots. Some of these plants have their first cluster of fruit on them. I carry the plants from the coldframe to the garden in the pots, dig the holes plenty big, then I turn each plant upside-down and give the edge of the pot a sharp rap on the corner of the wheelbarrow. That loosens the ball of earth from the pot and allows the plant to come free from the pot with all of its soil and roots intact. Then I set the plant in the hole, pour plenty of water around it, and when the water has soaked into the soil I fill the hole and slightly pack the soil around the plant.

Commercial gardeners are growing thousands of plants by what is termed the spotting system. By this system the plants are transplanted from the seedbed to other beds and set 3 to 5 inches apart, then when it comes to transferring them to the garden the soil is cut in blocks with a plant in the center of each block and in that way the plants receive very little setback as a result of being moved. Another method is to start hills of melons, cucumbers and squashes in paper bands in the greenhouse, hotbed or coldframe and then move them to the field.

No doubt many of you have experienced trouble with cutworms when you set your plants in the garden. Mr. Eisenhower has on several occasions announced to you the cutworm leaflet, issued by the Bureau of Entomology. It tells you how to prepare the poison bait and poison cutworms. I only have a small number of plants to set in my garden so I place a collar of stiff paper around the stem of each plant. First I cut the paper or thin cardboard into pieces about 3 1/2 inches square then I roll each piece around a lead pencil to form a sort of tube. As I set the plants I slip one of these tubes around the stem of each plant, placing it so that it will be about an inch or a little more below the surface and 2 inches above ground. I see to it that the paper tubes fit rather closely around the stems so that there will be no chance of the cutworms coming up inside the tubes.

a

Another good practice is to set wooden shingle or small piece of board on the south side of each plant so as to shade it for a day or two after planting. Now folks there really is a lot more that I might add about the handling of garden plants of all kinds but my time is up and I hope I have given you a few worthwhile suggestions. Next Tuesday we will hold the meeting of the Progressive Garden Club.